

ARTICLES

THE COURAGE TO LEAD

JAMES L. HEFT, S.M.

University of Dayton

This article explores the relationship between courage and leadership as it applies to Catholic educators. Scripture, literature, contemporary leadership theory, and modern culture are used in the development of an approach to leadership that is both theologically sound and culturally relevant. The author criticizes popular views of leadership, especially the work of Stephen Covey, in articulating a Catholic worldview and a functional leadership theory for Catholic educators.

Is it possible for a person to possess any virtue if he or she does not also possess the virtue of courage? Think of any virtue and ask yourself if it can really be a virtue if the person who has it lacks courage. If a person thinks she is generous, but lacks courage, does not that mean that she will give only when it does not hurt, when it does not cost her much personally? If a person thinks he is compassionate, but expresses compassion only when such an act would be well seen by others, does that person really possess the virtue of compassion? If people pride themselves on their honesty but do not speak out when it results in disapproval by influential persons and leads to a loss of their livelihood, can they in fact be thought to have the virtue of honesty? If then courage is the guarantee of all other virtues, why is not cowardice one of the seven capital sins? And how often do people in positions of religious authority trim their sails to the prevailing winds of their superior's wishes, practice self-censorship instead of saying what they really believe is the truth, and end up always doing what is acceptable rather than what is right? Are not people like us often chosen for the positions we hold because we are reliable, predictable, competent, careful, compliant and generous hard workers? Would we be chosen if we had reputations, in addition, for being courageous leaders?

These are difficult questions that have no simple answers. In this essay, we begin by reflecting on the meanings of courage: how it has been understood in our Catholic tradition and how, as religious leaders, we might embody it. We need to spend some time also reflecting on what it means to be a leader. What constitutes leadership is also not a simple matter. If all it takes to be a leader is courage, then not only those who might die for others are leaders, but also those who kill others and even commit suicide in the process. Obviously then, more must be involved in leadership than courage alone. And finally, we will focus on

two areas where, in my opinion, educational and religious leaders need to show more courage today. We begin with reflections on the virtue of courage, move to several understandings of leadership, and conclude with two specific challenges Catholic leaders face today.

COURAGE

The science fiction writer, Robert Heinlein, once wrote that “Roman matrons used to say to their sons: ‘Come back with your shield or on it.’ Later on,” he adds, “this custom declined. So did Rome” (Mogensen, 2000, para. 11). Bravery in battle is one definition of courage. Thus the ever enlightening Oxford English Dictionary [OED] (1989, p. 1051) lists as its fourth definition of courage “that quality of mind which shows itself in facing danger without fear or shrinking; bravery, boldness, valour.” Courage understood as bravery need not be limited to those who willingly enter battle.

Years ago, the great German theologian Romano Guardini wrote of the risks God took in creating us as free individuals who can say no to our creator. And at even greater personal risk, God sent his only son. Guardini asks:

Have we understood the bravery that fired the heart of Jesus, when He, who came from the presence—St. John says “from the bosom” (John 1:18)—of the Father, stepped into this earthly world? Into all the falsehood, the murderous cruelty, the pitiful narrowness of our existence? (1967, p. 86)

Like the OED, Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary (2003) reminds us of the rich etymology of the word “courage”: it is from the Latin, *cor*, and from the French *coeur*, meaning heart. When we say that persons have a “lot of heart,” we really are saying that they have a lot of courage. When we speak of persons who have heart, we are saying that their strength is located not just in their intelligence. In other words, heart is not just an intellectual quality, nor something characteristic of people who are physically strong, but rather in something much more encompassing, something that describes them as a whole.

Recently deceased English theologian McCabe (1986) published a marvelous short and eloquent catechism entitled *The Teaching of the Catholic Church*. In answer to the question, “What is courage?” McCabe writes:

Courage is a disposition of our feelings of aggression which inclines us, characteristically, to face up to and deal with difficulties and dangers for the sake of doing what is good: a courageous person is neither over-aggressive or timid; is angry about the right things at the right time and is prepared to suffer patiently when it is necessary, and even to die for the sake of justice or in witness to the gospel. (p. 68)

McCabe is a Dominican, that is, someone who takes seriously the thinking of St. Thomas Aquinas. So then, what does Thomas himself have to say about

courage? Actually, he developed more fully what McCabe puts so succinctly. Thomas wrote about fortitude, which is the same thing as courage. Thomas knew that not everyone who was willing to die for the faith did so as a true martyr; he reminds us that many of the early Church writers believed that God “would withdraw the strength of endurance from those who, arrogantly trusting their own resolve, thrust themselves into martyrdom” (Pieper, 1966, p. 119). In other words, the holiest act could be perverted by misguided enthusiasm masked as courage. How then is one to distinguish between courage on the one hand, and rashness on the other?

Pieper offers a thoughtful answer. He reminds us that the four cardinal virtues are always listed traditionally in the same order: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. In that sequence, fortitude, or courage, appears third. Prudence and justice precede it. Why? Because prudence helps a person know what it is good to do. Prudence has nothing to do with prudery or an inability to enter into the messy order of reality or to take risks. Thomas himself explains: “In overcoming danger, fortitude seeks not danger itself, but the realization of rational good” (Pieper, 1966, p. 122). Courage does not stand by itself; in fact, courage is secondary, and points to something that must precede it. Most of us would not naturally link prudence and courage. Prudent people, we might suppose, do not take risks. For Thomas, however, prudence is a quality of judgment that permits a person to discern what is good. If that is the case, then where is the risk?

To answer that question, we need to consider the meaning of the second cardinal virtue, justice. Again, according to Thomas, it is the “function of justice to carry out the order of reason [that is, what prudence discerns] in all human affairs” (Pieper, 1966, p. 125). In other words, courage, to be authentic, requires a “just cause.” Augustine says that it is “not the injury, but the cause that makes martyrs” (Pieper, 1966, p. 125). Thomas says that a person “does not expose his [or her] life to mortal danger, except to maintain justice. Therefore, the praise of courage depends upon justice” (Pieper, 1966, p. 125). And finally, St. Ambrose writes, “courage without justice is a lever of evil” (Pieper, 1966, p. 125). Given the typical sinful condition of not only the world but also ourselves, and realizing that those conditions require, if justice is to be achieved, that we repent and work to create an environment more conducive to holiness—then real risk for the prudent person is inescapable.

One further traditional insight into courage: Thomas distinguishes between endurance and attack, and observes that enduring over time all that it requires to do justice belongs more to the essence of courage than does responding in a moment to an attack. Endurance, of course, sounds passive. But it is not, especially when one remembers that enduring and being patient mean not getting discouraged in one’s efforts to bring about justice. This distinction is especially important for administrators to remember, for it is easy to be worn down by the multiple daily demands of one’s responsibilities—demands that can be likened, as one veteran administrator once told me, to being trampled to death by rabbits.

To endure means to “preserve cheerfulness and serenity” in the midst of a never-ending quest for justice (Pieper, 1966, p. 129). To die as a martyr for one’s faith requires a moment of great clarity and courage. To live over the long haul for one’s faith demands endurance and patience. St. Teresa of Avila states that courage is the prerequisite for a person seeking to grow in holiness. “I assert,” she wrote, “that an imperfect human being needs more courage to pursue the way of perfection than suddenly to become a martyr” (Pieper, 1966, p. 137).

Before concluding these reflections on the meaning of courage, let us return to a question posed at the outset: if courage is the form of every authentic virtue, why is its opposite, cowardice, not one of the seven deadly, or capital, sins? McCabe gives us an interesting lead. In answer to the question, “How do we fail in the exercise of courage?” he writes:

We fail in the exercise of courage by acquiescence in injustice through fear of the powerful or of public opinion; by conformity with the values of this world and by all forms of cowardice and laziness; by unreasonable anger and bad temper and by irresponsible rashness. (1986, p. 69)

The clue in McCabe’s answer is his reference to “laziness.” Now, one of the seven deadly sins is sloth. Dorothy Sayers, the British novelist, once divided up the seven deadly sins into two categories: the three disreputable but warm-hearted sins (lust, anger, and gluttony) and the four respectable cold-hearted sins (pride, covetousness, envy, and sloth). The first three are disreputable because they are so visible, and they ruin reputations. The last four are respectable because they can so easily masquerade as virtue. The former are sins of the flesh, the latter sins of the spirit, and as sins of the spirit, more likely to be graver (McCoy, 2001). Now, McCabe’s answer suggests a connection between cowardice and the sin of sloth since he refers to laziness as an example of cowardice.

McCoy, a Franciscan who is a chaplain at Oxford, recently published *An Intelligent Person’s Guide to Catholicism* (2001), the third part of which treats the seven deadly sins. McCoy describes sloth as the condition of the spiritual sleepwalker: it “believes in nothing, cares for nothing, loves nothing, hates nothing, finds purpose in nothing, lives for nothing, and only remains alive because there is nothing it would die for” (2001, p. 91). Few educators would see themselves in this description. But as one of the respectable cold hearted sins, sloth today often masquerades itself, McCoy goes on to explain, as either tolerance or workaholism. In our pluralistic and liberal democracy, we have learned to live and let live. Tolerance has become a very highly valued attitude; we learn not to make judgments, not to say that something is wrong or right, not to make unnecessary waves. Sloth can also disguise itself as workaholism, that is as rushing about doing all sorts of things, all the while oblivious to the real issues of justice and love (McCoy, 2001). We will return to the issues of workaholism and tolerance later.

In sum, it is clear that courage cannot stand alone; it needs to be informed by a sense of the good and compelled by a sense of justice. We have also seen that the opposite of courage, cowardice, can actually be understood as one of the capital—that is, root—sins, namely sloth. And if we pressed harder with our analysis, we might even be able to make the case that courage is the form of all authentic virtues, something Aristotle explored millennia before St. Thomas (Hauerwas, 1975). The making of that case, however, will have to wait for another occasion. Now, we need to turn our attention to leadership, the responsibility each of us has to be courageous persons who build the kingdom of God.

LEADERSHIP

A visit to the local bookstore gives one the impression that books about leadership are second in number only to those about self-help. And views of what constitutes leadership seem to change rapidly. An article in the *Administrative Science Quarterly* does not inspire hope when it lists theories of leadership that now seem to be obsolete:

As we survey the path leadership theory has taken, we spot the wreckage of ‘trait theory,’ the ‘great man’ theory, the ‘situationist’ critique, leadership styles, functional leadership, and finally, leaderless leadership, to say nothing of bureaucratic leadership, charismatic leadership, group-centered leadership, reality-centered leadership, leadership by objective, and so on. (as cited in Bennis, 1994, p. 39)

You will notice that missing from this list is the theory known as “servant leadership,” which in recent years has become popular in Christian circles. Unfortunately, like clothing styles, leadership theories seem to change often. It is important to remember that the Christian tradition affirms certain important truths about leadership. Instead of one theory of leadership replacing another, the Christian tradition shows that many different types of leadership can co-exist. Thus, beginning with examples from the New Testament, who is to say that Peter and John and James and Paul and Mary, the Mother of Jesus, were not each of them important leaders—although leaders in very different ways? Peter the spokesperson of the disciples, impetuous but ultimately faithful; John the mystic whose closeness to Jesus made him both a source of wisdom and jealousy for the other disciples; James, the leader of the Jerusalem community who found ways to create a Jewish form of Christianity; Paul, without whom the powerful movement of the Gospel into the Gentile world would not have taken place; and Mary, without whose courageous yes to a Spirit-guided and -filled life with Jesus and in the midst of the Apostles, we would not ourselves be believers today. The canonized saints of the Church are hardly clones: Thomas Aquinas and Therese of Lisieux, Francis of Assisi and Augustine, Elizabeth Ann Seton and Edith Stein—and all of them continue to have a great impact on the

life of the Church. And in our own day, are not Popes John XXIII and John Paul II very different persons, but both recognized as great leaders?

Not only are there many forms of leadership, each playing important roles at the same and at different times, in the same and in different situations, but also it ought to be obvious that the people with whom we interact have a profound impact on the leaders we become. Once, while being pressed to answer a reporter's question about her "style as a leader," Dorothy Day, the founder of the Catholic Worker movement, responded: "Leadership isn't only something in you, in a person—your personality. Leadership depends on where you are as much as who you are, and it depends on the company you're keeping" (Coles, 1998, p. 10). Each of us could name several people completely unknown to the people we work with daily who have had a profound influence on the type of person we have become.

Servant leadership has become quite popular in recent years, and deservedly so. Servant leaders, according to the principal promoter of this approach to leadership, Greenleaf (1977), are humble; they do not make their authority be felt by others in the way, as Jesus once remarked, that the Gentiles do. Servant leaders listen; they are patient and receptive. Yet if we are to be servant leaders after the example of Jesus, we will also need to speak the truth, risk rejection, set forth a vision that divides people, and confront injustice. Too often these latter emphases are missing from popular descriptions of the "servant leader."

Besides Greenleaf, Stephen Covey has exercised even wider influence among people interested in leadership. His book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (1989), has sold over 12 million copies and has been translated into 28 languages. A few years ago Covey was reported to be advising eight of the top 10 leaders of the top Fortune 100 companies. He also has run workshops for some of the leaders of Catholic schools. Materials have been developed for effective schools. Like Greenleaf, Covey has some valuable things to say. Noteworthy is his desire to develop "principled leadership" and character as opposed to mere personality (the subtitle of his book is: "Restoring the Character Ethic"). He realizes that leaders need to do "inner work," and that "spirituality" contributes in an essential way to a leader's vision. He makes recommendations that are as helpful as they are simply a matter of common sense: be proactive, distinguish between the important and the urgent, learn to listen and understand, and take the time to renew yourself—or, as he puts it in one of his stories, take the time to sharpen your saw.

On the other hand, there are serious deficiencies in Covey's version of things, especially for those responsible for leading institutions and communities. His advice is pitched to individuals working on themselves, people faced, as self-help literature often puts it, with the prospect of self-realization. Covey reassures readers that the persons to whom he speaks can be from any or no particular religious tradition, though he himself is a devout Mormon. Remember, among other things, Mormons do not believe in hell, or original sin, and do not

think of salvation as a gift—rather, one earns salvation through good deeds and intelligent problem solving. Sociologist Wolfe (1998) writes that “Mormonism was an engineer’s religion, a doctrine for the pragmatic, no-nonsense kind of person who practiced a kind of white magic on the material world, demanding that it yield its secrets for the cause of human betterment” (p. 29). It all sounds pretty upbeat, like the creed of affluent and ambitious suburbanites.

Covey assures people that they can find within themselves all the principles needed for leadership. He constantly speaks of effectiveness. But we need to remember that it is possible to be very wrong and quite effective at the same time. Being effective is not necessarily knowing what is good, or determining what is just, or having the courage to do the right thing. Covey also promotes “win/win” strategies that rely on compromises. Such strategies can be useful when the goals do not violate matters of principle. Some situations, however, do not admit of a “win/win” strategy, such as one that would require a school to sacrifice its Catholic mission to gain funding.

Covey also tells people that they must exercise mastery over themselves; in fact, the very first step in becoming “highly effective” is “self mastery” (1989, p. 56). For Covey, the inner consciousness of the self is where persons find their source of power. At the beginning of the chapter devoted to explicating the second habit, “Begin with the End in Mind,” he quotes Oliver Wendell Holmes: “What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us” (Covey, 1989, p. 96). He emphasizes the critical importance of creating oneself, of writing one’s own script.

Why am I spending this much time criticizing some of Covey’s key ideas? Because at root Covey’s ideas support a major weakness in our American culture: its deep individualism. That individualism goes unchallenged by Covey’s vision of the highly effective person; in fact, following Covey’s advice supports individualism. Covey could learn some important lessons from Dorothy Day about the necessity of a community. For her and for the Christian tradition, it is community that supports, forms and challenges a person who seeks, or better, is chosen to be its leader.

Covey also promotes the concept of charismatic leaders, the natural flower of the individualist plant. Charisma is fine, but has limited usefulness. A given school, for example, at a certain point in its history, might need a leader with strong management skills. Another school might need a change agent, and still another school might need a healer, someone who can re-establish trust. Charismatic leaders have no trouble getting followers, but seldom succeed in getting people to face their own problems. A much more thoughtful, balanced and realistic approach to the multifaceted nature of leadership may be found in the books of Heifetz (1994; Heifetz & Linsky, 2002).

It may seem that this critique is a little hard on Covey. That is because when we read him, most Catholics, almost unconsciously, supply what is missing in his writings—namely a sense of community, God at the center of our being, and salvation as a gift. Nevertheless, this critique is meant to emphasize the impor-

tance of drawing first on our Christian traditions for some of the most adequate insights into leadership.

COURAGE TO LEAD: SOME EXAMPLES

We have looked at different meanings of courage and drawn lessons from its placement as third of the four cardinal virtues. We have offered at least a partial answer as to why cowardice may not be found as one of the seven deadly sins. That leadership can take many forms should now be clear, and that Covey's seven effective habits, while hardly the seven deadly sins, nonetheless play into a number of weaknesses characteristic of our current culture. But before turning to several areas where more courageous leadership needs to be exercised, there has been massive and largely successful change that has taken place in Catholic education over the last 40 years that merits our attention.

The National Catholic Educational Association reported in its annual statistical report (McDonald, 2002) that the total U.S. Catholic school enrollment was 2,553,277. The report also indicated that 6,785 elementary/middle schools enrolled nearly 2 million students and 1,215 high schools enrolled 650,000 students. Both levels together employed a full-time equivalent professional staff of nearly 165,000 persons, of whom 94% are laymen and laywomen, 4.2% are sisters, and the remaining 1.8% are priests and brothers. Since the historic high point of 1965, the number of elementary schools has decreased about 40% and the number of high schools by 50% and the overall enrollment in both levels has dropped by over 50%. In 1965, a total of 104,314 sisters taught in our schools; now only 7,389 remain active in the schools. Given that staggering amount of change, it is a wonder that we are doing as well as we are—and we are! After a period of drift through the 1970s and 1980s, most of these schools rededicated themselves to their religious missions, became better educational institutions, and now teach much more diverse student populations. As an editorial in *America* magazine recently concluded, "the prestige of U.S. Catholic elementary and secondary schools is probably greater today than ever. In the big cities they are generally considered better than the public schools" (Valiant Women, 2003, p. 3). To be sure, financial pressures remain severe in many institutions, but the creative and generous response of many people, mostly women, has shown resilient and courageous leadership.

There are, however, two areas where we need to do better: issues of justice and diversity.

Concerning justice, a great difference now exists between many of our inner city schools and those we have in the suburbs. Unlike the Catholic immigrants served in the cities 100 years ago, many of those living in the inner city now are African American, Haitian, Asian, and Latino. Many of them are often not Catholic; almost all of them are poor and suffer discrimination. By contrast, the challenge in our suburbs, where most Catholics (except in the Southwest) are

middle class if not affluent, is to teach the social justice message clearly. In the inner city schools, where often a majority of the students are not Catholic, the challenge is to be clearly Catholic and ecumenical at the same time.

Thoughtful Catholics today should find themselves politically homeless; what we need are more pro-life Democrats and social justice Republicans. But for many well-to-do suburban Catholics, the social teachings of the Church sound like the “Democratic Party at prayer.” At their June 1998 meeting, the American bishops issued a statement in which they acknowledge that “our social justice doctrine is not shared or taught in a consistent and comprehensive way in too many of our schools, seminaries, religious education programs, colleges and universities” (*Sharing*, 1998, p. 3). The bishops ask the leaders of Catholic schools to help their faculties learn more about the social teachings of the Church, and to integrate them into their curricula.

Two consequences flow directly from a serious personal appropriation by Catholic educators of the social teachings of the Church. First, our schools should never be havens for the well-to-do who want their children to get a bigger piece of the financial pie while not losing their faith. That the leaders of some Catholic high schools tout more than anything else the number of academic scholarships, often quantifying them in terms of total dollars, that their seniors win from prestigious universities indicates that the social teachings of the Church have not yet taken root in the consciousness of the leadership of those schools. Indeed, we want our graduates to succeed—but the success they should seek is not to fit seamlessly into society, but to transform it so that it is more accommodating of the common good.

The second consequence touches upon why it is so difficult to promote the social teachings of the Church. To do so requires that people learn to do “social analysis.” Dom Helder Camara, the now retired bishop of Recife in northeastern Brazil, one of the poorest dioceses in that huge country, once remarked: “When I give food to the poor, they think I am a saint; when I ask why the poor do not have food, they think I am a communist.” Social analysis goes beyond doing service projects and being compassionate to those in need. It requires individuals to study the causes of poverty, to work for more equitable and just treatment of people—especially the poor—and to risk their own status and standing for the sake of those more vulnerable. It means becoming vulnerable for the vulnerable. To do that, one needs the courage to lead.

Do not be naïve about the tensions involved in taking such stands. Catholic schools at every level depend upon philanthropy to survive. Unless wealthy persons give generously to our institutions, many poor people would not be able to attend them. But not a few wealthy persons find the social justice emphasis threatening, and believe that a responsible Catholic must support neo-conservative economics. They read the *Wall Street Journal*, not the *National Catholic Reporter*. How do we promote the social justice teachings of the Church, and retain a strong degree of philanthropic support?

For years one tendency among many of those who advocate social justice

has been troublesome. It seems that few of them realize that running truly Catholic schools is a great act of social justice. Rather, when they identify social justice issues, they think of only direct action—picketing, lobbying, boycotting, and forming political action groups. It is important to support all these activities for just causes. But rarely is the intimate link between social justice and education understood. As Fr. William Byron (2003) recently observed,

Catholics, the bearers of this tradition of Catholic social thought, clearly believe in the importance of education—not simply religious education for the protection and cultivation of faith, but education of every person's full human potential for enjoyment of a full and productive life. You will search in vain for a person who is well educated and also involuntarily poor. Hence, an important strategic step in the reduction of poverty (a social justice issue) is the provision of sound education. (p. 284)

For Catholic education to be an act of social justice depends at least in part on what our students learn, not just that they are educated. Therefore, we need to do a better job of leading our institutions in becoming centers of education for social justice. We need first the prudence to identify those issues, and then the courage to confront them. Of course, if we do not teach them how to pray, write, read and speak, their witness as committed Christians will be accordingly truncated.

The second issue is that of “diversity.” In recent years people in higher education have expended much energy on diversity. It has also been talked about with a slightly different emphasis as multi-culturalism. In general, this cultural and educational movement emphasizes the importance of differences, respecting them, even celebrating them. It criticizes forms of sexism and racism that make it difficult to affirm the genuine dignity of each human being, a foundational component of Catholic social teaching. It opposes the setting of one culture above the other, and is especially wary of any form of Euro-centrism. The Church itself has become more aware in recent decades that it is not just a Latin European Western community. How to enter sympathetically into quite diverse cultures and retain unity and a strong sense of Catholic identity in the Church constitutes one of the great challenges of the future. In my judgment, these movements are all significant and needed. A creative and courageous way to respond to these movements is to follow the lead of the Spirit at Pentecost; there, the apostles, gathered with Mary the Mother of Jesus in prayer, spoke the same saving message in multiple languages, in ways that people from many different cultures could understand and embrace. Many new believers, the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2:47) tells us, were added that day to their number.

But certain approaches to diversity and multi-culturalism are based on a false idea of tolerance. Some leaders recommend the practice of tolerance when faced with a multitude of differences. In his most recent book, Jesuit social ethicist Hollenbach (2002) writes:

There are many indications in the United States today that tolerance of diversity occupies the place held by the common good in the thought of Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas and Ignatius of Loyola. Tolerance, not the common good, has become the highest social aspiration in American culture. (p. 24)

To support his claim, Hollenbach cites the work of sociologist Alan Wolfe's 1998 study, *One Nation After All*, which explores what the American middle class really thinks about public morality. Wolfe gives us good news and bad news. The good news is that instead of a war between cultures, something close to a consensus exists on what is most highly valued by the middle class. The highest good now is tolerance. The bad news is that the highest good is tolerance. Wolfe suggests that an 11th commandment should be added to the biblical Decalogue: "Thou shalt not judge" (Hollenbach, 2002, p. 30). This is bad news because first it is self-contradictory. Tolerance does not abide intolerance. And to say that one should not judge is, obviously, to make the judgment that one should not judge. Thus, if someone criticizes another person for judging, they are judging that judging is going on. Even to suspend judgment is a judgment. Thomas Aquinas teaches that judgment is the highest act of the intellect; to judge rightly is to be in contact with reality as it really is. And to judge rightly often is to be wise. Therefore, our only choice is to judge in a certain way—that is, to use again a word we examined at the beginning of this address, to judge prudently.

An excellent example of a deficient form of tolerance is the new television show, "Joan of Arcadia." The premise of the show is that God speaks to a non-religious teenage girl through ordinary people and events. The creator of the show, Barbara Hall, gave the writers of the show 10 commandments that guide what God can and cannot do. Among them are "God cannot directly intervene," "God can never identify one religion as being right," "The job of every human being is to fulfill his or her true nature," and "God is not a person and does not possess a human personality" (Braxton, 2003, p. E6). The show has already done well enough to get a full-page article in the November 3, 2003 issue of *Time* magazine, entitled "Losing God's Religion." And its producers have decided (judged prudently?) to extend the show for the full season. The author of the *Time* article observes that the creator of the show, by giving God certain commandments to follow, actually severs God from religion, a tactic she hopes will appeal to a broader viewing audience. With this sort of God, everything becomes a win-win situation (Poniewozik, 2003). But separating God from a specific religion may remove divisiveness for those who believe only in generalities; but what about those, we may ask, who believe that God has spoken to us not just in generalities, but also in particularities, and personally? For those of us who believe in Jesus as the savior of the world, and who believe that he calls us to speak the truth in love, and to do so even if it means laying down our lives for others—that particularity is also our redemption and glory. Catholicism does believe that God has the power to intervene, that the Father has spoken his fullest self in

Jesus, and that all religions are not equally revealing of who God truly is.

What does all this have to do with the social movements for diversity and multi-culturalism? We have already made clear the need to support many aspects of these movements. But they also typically promote a version of tolerance that avoids commitments to particulars. If you have an admissions policy that favors Catholics over non-Catholics, if you have an educational vision that affirms that moral judgments can and should be made about a culture that permits abortion on demand, that opposes the death penalty, and does not accept the Joan of Arcadia god who never says that one religion might be better than another—then, in this sort of culture, you will need courage to articulate and defend those very particular commitments. Moreover, anyone challenging contemporary ideas of tolerance, of total “inclusiveness,” would be in danger of being accused of intolerance, or aiding and abetting religious violence, or something even worse. The Catholic tradition is rich and complex, and only administrators and religious leaders with prudence and courage will be able to make a persuasive case for it.

CONCLUSION

So, what might be our challenges? Where do we need to muster the courage to discern the common good and act for justice? Our challenge is to find ways to affirm the distinctiveness and truth of our Catholic faith even as we respect people of other religious convictions. Our challenge is to make judgments about right and wrong when many others will not agree with our judgment, or simply refuse to make moral judgments. Our challenge is also to avoid arrogance, to collaborate with others with whom we do not fully agree for the sake of the common good. Referring to strategies concerning abortion and public policy, Byron writes that our challenge is to “participate in alliances that would narrow the range of the permissible even if what remains permissible is unacceptable to the Catholic conscience” (2003, p. 282). Our challenge is to oppose same-sex marriages but not “to deny human persons who are also homosexuals their reasonable genuine human rights” (Byron, 2003, pp. 282-283). Our challenge is to advocate for the poor without condemning the rich, especially those with a social conscience and a commitment to the common good. Our challenge is to convince suburban parents that the moral and religious formation of their sons and daughters is every bit as important, even more important, than their admission into a prestigious university.

In other words, we must avoid on the one hand a bland tolerance that requires no moral judgments, and on the other a self-righteous and imprudent understanding of the complexity of the exigencies of working for the common good. Some of us work in dioceses where to make such discriminating judgments would put our continued employment in question. If we have families to raise, our jobs are very important. If we are celibates for the kingdom, we may worry less about our employment but still fear that our reputation and future in the Church will suffer damage. The courage to lead, however, requires that,

accompanied sufficiently by prudence and justice, we attend to our souls more than to our financial livelihood or even our reputation. “Life is short, eternity is long,” wrote John Henry Newman at the end of his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845/1989, p. 445). At that point, in the middle of his long life, he had just left the Anglican Church where he was distrusted and joined the Catholic Church where he was unappreciated. He struggled to understand God’s will. He did not enjoy the fantasy of complete clarity that Joan of Arcadia does. The marionette God of the Joan of Arcadia producers is unlike our “undomesticated” God, to whom we give no commandments but who in his omnipotence chooses human frailty and death.

Facing crises should not be unusual for us who participate regularly in the celebration of the Eucharist. The bread is broken; the wine is poured out. Death is literally less than a day away for Jesus. At the heart of every Eucharistic meal, then, is a major crisis. There is also a great example and promise. About to lose everything, even his very life, Jesus still spoke of unity and of humbly washing the feet of our brothers and sisters. And he promised that those who ate his body and drank his blood would live forever.

We began with some reflections on several of the four cardinal virtues. We conclude by turning to the three theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity. Niebuhr, a great American theologian of the last century, described these virtues in a way that can be a source of wisdom and strength for all of us, engaged as we are in a mission that extends beyond ourselves, a mission to which we can contribute but not complete:

Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime; therefore we must be saved by hope. Nothing which is true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore we must be saved by faith. Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore we are saved by love. No virtuous act is quite as virtuous from the standpoint of our friend or foe as it is from our standpoint. Therefore we must be saved by the final form of love which is forgiveness.
(as quoted in McClay, 2002, p. 25)

Faith, hope and love, prudence, justice and courage. What does the world look like when our task is not to tolerate people but to love them and to speak the truth to them and to challenge them, and how much courage do we, the leaders of institutions, need to make that the question that organizes and focuses all our work? Over against eternity, taking temporal risks after prudential reflection for the sake of justice forms the basis for a full life, a life with the courage to lead. May the Lord give us strength to be such leaders!

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Rev. James L. Heft, S.M. is University Professor of Faith and Culture and Chancellor at the University of Dayton. Correspondence concerning this article should be sent to Rev. James Heft, S.M., University of Dayton, 300 College Park, Dayton, OH, 45469-1549.